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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001664

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [ENRG](#) [IZ](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR IRAQ, BUT NO NEW INITIATIVES

REF: STATE 30179

Classified By: DCM Robert O. Blake, Jr., for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Outgoing MEA Joint Secretary (Gulf Division) R. Dayakar and his successor Sanjay Singh reiterated GOI willingness to support Iraq's reconstruction, but offered no new initiatives in a meeting with PolCouns and PolMilOff on March 3. Assistance to Iraq will continue to be constrained by what the UPA's Left parties and the Congress Party will support. Despite these constraints, Indo-Iraq trade continues, especially in the oil sector. India hopes to reactivate a pre-2001 contract for oil exploration in Iraq. End Summary.

12. (C) Presenting a non-paper encouraging support for the Iraqi transitional government (Reftel), PolCouns expressed appreciation for GOI statements following the January 30 elections, and noted that support for the democratic transition in Iraq remains among the USG's highest priorities.

13. (C) Dayakar reviewed current GOI support for Iraq: training and scholarships in India for Iraqis and a new program to produce high energy biscuits for the World Food Program for distribution in Iraq. Earlier proposals such as the dispatch of a military hospital to Najaf would be activated when the security situation improves, he promised. In the meantime, the travel ban on Indian citizens traveling to Iraq remains in effect, and sending Indian troops will not be considered. He confirmed that the GOI will participate in the donors' conference for Iraq in April.

14. (SBU) PolCouns asked about a March 2 article in "The Asian Age" about hundreds of Indian agricultural workers from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh who migrate to Iraq each month despite the travel ban, seeking work in military camps, construction sites, and transport companies. Dayakar opined that most of these workers are actually looking for work in other Gulf States, but are lured to Iraq by unscrupulous manpower agents.

15. (C) Despite the travel ban, Indo-Iraq trade continues, Dayakar explained. Notably, oil trade with Iraq has increased and will continue to do grow as India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) pre-2001 contract for oil exploration is reactivated. According to Dayakar, Iraq is one of several countries where India is pursuing new oil exploration opportunities.

16. (C) In the aftermath of the January 30 elections, PolCouns commented on positive changes in Iraq and internationally: that some observers had noted that the insurgency may be losing support because of the elections, and that even opponents to Coalition intervention in Iraq are making constructive statements. Recalling a GOI official's comment that Indian Parliamentary politics are "lagging behind reality" in the case of Iraq, PolCouns asked about MP interest in Iraq in the current session of Parliament. Dayakar responded that Parliament is a fair barometer of public interest, and that there had been 2-3 queries on facts, not policies, submitted by Parliament the previous day. In the absence of a new political directive, he indicated that GOI policy would continue on its current cautious path.

17. (C) PolCouns also asked about the status of GOI acceptance of the agreement for the Iraqi ambassador-designate to India. Dayakar said the agreement had been held up for "technical reasons." (Note: According to Iraqi Charge S. Husayn, the agreement has been pending since September.) However, he promised fast-track consideration of the agreement and indicated that the GOI would revive its invitation for an Iraqi Foreign Minister visit to New Delhi as soon as the transitional government is selected.

18. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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